

1 CONWAY MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE AGENDA  
2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER  
3 KENNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL  
4 CONWAY, NH

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6 January 22, 2024, at 6:30 PM  
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8

9 The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. The following Budget Committee members were present:  
10 Michael Lacey, Bob Drinkhall, Dave Jensen, Bill Marvel, Vice-Chair Frank Jost, Chair Peter Donohoe  
11 Stacy Sand, Quentin Lewis, Jim LeFebvre, Steve Angers, Ellin Leonard, John ?  
12

13 **Absent-** Steven Steiner, Randy Davison, Ryan Shepard  
14

15 **Pledge of Allegiance-** Chair Peter Donohoe led the Pledge of Allegiance.  
16

17 **Town Budget Discussions**  
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19 **Government Buildings**  
20

21 Andrew Smith- Govt Buildings budget is up 1.73% the biggest part being wages. We reduced the  
22 electricity line by upgrading to LED lights and getting a better rate. The heating line is down, and we  
23 are doing fairly good. Repairs have increased, we were a little bit over last year. Other than that, it is  
24 pretty much basic stuff there.  
25

26 B. Marvel- is this the library?  
27

28 A. Smith- no that is in a different budget. This is the annex or the Whitaker building.  
29

30 Q. Lewis- how can wages go up in different % than say the retirement?  
31

32 K. G- it is due to wages being split in different departments.  
33

34 J. LeFebvre- in the annex building you have some operations paying rent? How much is that rent?  
35

36 A. Smith- I believe they rent two spaces for \$750.  
37

38 **Highway**  
39

40 A. Smith- last year we had a category Highway and Highway admin, we have combined those two  
41 categories, so it is going to look like the wages increased a lot in highway, but it is the admin stuff in  
42 here. The increase is .7% combined. The reason it is low is due to the insurance benefit, and the fuel  
43 line is down as we did not spend as much as anticipated, but it is a roll of the dice anticipating diesel  
44 fuel prices. Pavement is up 4% at \$20,000 and line striping is up \$15,000. The cost of materials is up.  
45 wages are up due to the annual raises.

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Q. Lewis- has repairs moved?

A. Smith- Yes, we have split those line items and repairs have been in the garage budget. The budget has been \$6,000 in the past, but we have been going over that a little between furnaces, septic systems, and heaters. We have \$4,000 in each building now which is an increase in what we had in 2023.

J. LeFebvre- for those watching can you explain what is going on with the legal line and the changes.

A. Smith- legal used to be all in the executive budget, and they have now moved it around to different departments. We have a legal line as we have on occasion must go after people for fines and driveway encroachment issues.

**Garage**

A. Smith- there is a 16% increase we have a new mechanic. We work on highways, solid waste, parks, school, town, Conway Center Fire. The mechanics are running out of time and items are not getting done. We are now at 92 units that we cover, with the addition of fourteen units coming. Right now, we have two mechanics and a supervisor. We spent all summer with ads in the paper. We have had a few people come and go.

Q. Lewis- where are the lines for oil changes and parts?

A. Smith- it is in line-item inventory. That item is where all the parts get charged to and then when it gets billed out it goes back into that line. It is just a place to charge the parts. There is also a supply line. We figure that the school pays 30%.

S. Sand- who was Conway Fire using before for mechanic work? It seems like a huge increase.

A. Smith- they were going to Albany Auto, a truck place in Albany, Forche Tire. We looked at what the town was billing out an hour and what the local shops were billing out too, and we came out to be about \$100 an hour and others are at around \$140 an hour plus mark ups on parts. If you took your vehicle to an outside shop, you are looking at paying 33% more. Keeping it in house ads more flexibility, we get better pricing on parts.

J. LeFebvre- when all these fire departments consolidate is there any discussions on ways to reduce the inventory line to what is needed.

A. Smith- talking with the Chief, it will be an evaluation period and possibly a consolidation.

**Solid Waste**

A. Smith- this is another one where we moved admin in, with an increase of 3.67%. The only increase is wages and no other big items. The telephone line is up \$700.

92 Q. Lewis- you mentioned the increase was 3.67% mine says 14% is that because you added in the  
93 admin?

94  
95 S. Sand- how is recycling going? I know the markets change.

96  
97 A. Smith- I believe the total is 39% we have done good on all the materials. Everything is going out at  
98 zero or for a little bit of money.

99  
100 S. Sand- in the landfill were talking about a new process over there, can you explain that?

101  
102 A. Smith- as we started opening phase 3 of the landfill, we needed more trash. However, we could  
103 ensure that it was recycled, which is why all the big haulers no longer bring it in. We mix in some chips  
104 with the sludge. We have 1200 tons less trash than last year. We are in essence filling up the landfill  
105 slower. It appears that in around 2030/2031 we will need to create the next phase in the landfill.

106  
107 **Capital Reserve Funds**

108  
109 A. Smith- on sidewalks we increased the amount we are going to spend. The contractor who has done  
110 it in the past has held his pricing for the past 2 years. We have our standard roads that we will be doing  
111 this year, we have a deck bridge replacement, with a contractor already picked out. We have additional  
112 bridge aid we received from the state that will go towards the bridge projects.

113  
114 **Highway Equipment Replacement**

115 A. Smith- we ordered a new truck last year; we just have not paid for it yet. We have had to adjust  
116 numbers; the paint keeps changing. The wheeler you see here has doubled since the last one we  
117 bought. There is a lease payment included here. Last year's ask was around \$450,000 I believe.

118  
119 **Solid Waste Equipment-** solid waste equipment costs have not increased as much as the other truck  
120 equipment. Lease payments on the trash compactor.

121  
122 S. Sand- on a few of these I see you want to go 15 years out, is there a reason for that?

123  
124 A. Smith- life expectancy is what we go on. We have taken road tractors and put dump bodies on them,  
125 and they last longer. There are some pieces that get extended use due to their limited use.

126  
127 **Landfill expansion-** we did have a surveyor survey the landfill with a drone. So, we are looking at  
128 2030/2031 to be building the next phase. So, we take the cost of that expansion and build that figure  
129 out over the number of years and we come to about \$200,000 a year. The whole landfill is in five  
130 phases.

131  
132 **Maintenance of Town Buildings & Facilities-** this is for all owned properties. We have a few projects  
133 listed for this year. The police station needs some attention, if the addition does not happen, we do  
134 need to do the windows. The meeting room at the library floor needs to be done and then some other  
135 smaller projects.

136

137 F. Jost- looking out I see the \$75,000 roof on the Town Hall annex, and that is more than what you are  
138 bringing in per year in revenue, how long is the lease on that building? When I see a charge like this, I  
139 wonder what the logic is to hold onto the building.

140  
141 J. Eastman- We do not want to be spending more than we are bringing in, I would agree with you it is a  
142 cost analysis on what you are spending vs what you are bringing in. How do we go about finding the  
143 heirs, I do not know. Just the fact that we spend money to run ads in paper and we cannot find anyone  
144 to rent the spaces.

145 Leased Town Facilities- this is for TH, and the rec center through the middle school, the elevator  
146 update is already done. We have a boiler upgrade placeholder. The company that did the LED lights  
147 and the upgrade looked at the boilers and recommended adding two propane boilers in there,  
148 upgrading the pumps. We have a roof on here as a placeholder.

149  
150 Park department vehicle- this is simple, it is the parks maintenance division, they have few trucks and  
151 trailers and have small rack body and trailer to get replaced this year.

152  
153 Police Department Vehicles- the rotation is 2 a year, so we are asking for \$80,000 this year. The  
154 Chargers are going away in 2024. We got two cruisers this year for \$39,265. Because the charger is not  
155 available anymore there was not one available for the State bid.

156

#### 157 **Warrant Articles**

158

159 A. Smith- Union CBA- the changes if this pass will be an increase of \$1.00 per hour. The reason is to  
160 make us more competitive. There is also a swap of a holiday, and we added comp time this year. They  
161 are allowed to build up to 40 a year.

162

163 J. Eastman- the pay adjustment was just for 1-year not three.

164

165 Chief Mattei- Police CBS- this is a 1-year contract, due to the health insurance. What we budgeted this  
166 year, I think we will see a return. The cost of the contract is \$68,894. Right now, we do a 3% raise each  
167 year, the union is asking to do a 4% max. They want to do a 2% given and a 2% match. The pay  
168 adjustments are really geared towards our starting pay. They are also asking for an additional holiday.  
169 We do not really get holidays as we are 365 days a year.

170

171 J. Eastman- Eastern Slope Airport- that request is \$12,000 and that is the same as recommended by the  
172 BOS.

173

174 S. Sand- towns must contribute in order to get the federal grant money.

175

176 J. Eastman- TC/Tc and the Supervisors of the checklist only get a stipend of \$1,500 and we are adding  
177 an extra \$4,500. In 2024 there are four regular elections, and the supervisors also have to do school,  
178 precincts, and town elections. We increased the stipend to a \$2,000 base and then increased based on  
179 elections. We had a lot of discussions on this. We got a survey from at least thirty other towns, and  
180 maybe half of them paid hourly but the pay per hour was all over the place. We do not deny they work  
181 hard. They do work all year and we believe this was the best option possible. When I looked at the past  
182 all adjustments went in front of the voters.

183

184 S. Sand- they are almost making the same as selectmen. It is a lot to ask for if they want to be a paid  
185 employee then they need to go to the State and get the laws changed. A lot of these positions are  
186 volunteers, and it is a large ask.

187

188 K. Golding- there is a whole slew of things, and it is more than just an election job, and there is a lot of  
189 pressure, and they must go to special training and learn the software and learn the systems. They have  
190 a lot of duties to do during the days. It is hard enough to find volunteers. And they are required to have  
191 four sessions a year. They have to purge the checklist every 10 years.

192

193 Paul- Housing Standards article- no questions.

194 Paul- Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive- we have given a lot of speeches to affordable  
195 housing and if we want to have affordable housing, we need to make it affordable for the developers  
196 to build it.

197

198 Paul- they get a tax break on any new development. They get taxed on the predevelopment  
199 assessment, then get a discount on any improvements that they make.

200

201 P. Donohoe- there is a lot of information for the Conway Village Fire District can we get more  
202 information more expeditious.

203

204 J. Eastman- there are nine of them, some are housekeeping, and some are nonmonetary. The Town of  
205 Conway is the steward of the Trust funds, and we just distribute the funds there are nine articles, but  
206 we cannot change them. The veteran's exemption tax credit is the all veteran tax credit and that was  
207 changed in 2018, the reason that is changing now is that the state limit is \$750, and we give \$500. In  
208 the all veterans the language changed last year by the state, and you had to readopt the \$500, had you  
209 not readopted it, it would have fallen to \$50. The reason it has reappeared is that the Selectmen have  
210 increased it to \$750 to go to the State max.

211

212 K. Golding- as you know we had an increase in our health insurance rates. So, we looked at all plan  
213 options. We decided to investigate offering more so that employees will take the high deductible plan  
214 of \$3,000. So, I came up with an idea of coming up with a health reimbursement fund and fund half of  
215 that deductible. So, for a single plan if they use their deductible, they get reimbursed what they use.  
216 How do we fund that annually? So, I came up with the Capital Reserve Fund to help fund the liability. It  
217 funds about 50% of the liability, I asked the selectmen to use the unassigned fund balance, so it does  
218 not cost the taxpayers anything, and then I would ask for the rest of the liability next year out of the  
219 unreserved fund balance. We are not going to use that full liability that we are budgeting for, I think  
220 after next year we will be fully funded, and it will vary year to year depending on what is spent and  
221 plan changes, in the long run I think this will be a savings on the Town.

222

223 J. Eastman- the first one is asking for authorization to operate the water and the next is to run the  
224 sewer. The next few are just housekeeping items.

225

226 S. Sand- what If the voters vote it down. I thought we were obligated to take it over.

227

228 A. Smith- the obligation for the dissolution is that the selectmen must continue to operate the district  
229 until all the obligations are met. Once we adopt these gives the selectmen more authority.

230

231 B. Marvel- it looks like some typos on page 35.

232

### 233 **Town Default Budget**

234

235 K. Golding- - the default definition means the amount of the same appropriations as contained in the  
236 operating budget authorized for the previous year, reduced and increased as the case may be by det  
237 service contracts and other obligations previously incurred are mandated by law and reduced by one-  
238 time expenditures contained in the operating budget and by salaries and benefits of positions that  
239 have been eliminated in the proposed budget. I made no increase to non-union payroll, I removed 1x  
240 expenses, I added all union contract expenses. I reached out to all my resources and a lot of the budget  
241 law has changed over the years. I did make a change to the election default, as they are mandated by  
242 law. Total default is \$4,689,016 or an increase of 1.39%, this will leave the total default budget to be  
243 \$14, 327,460. The amount of change to the proposed total budget is \$486,602 or 3.28%.

244

245 ***B. Marvel motioned in consideration of the enormous increase in property tax burden that Conway***  
246 ***homeowners recently suffered, and the additionally onerous tax increase posed by the proposed***  
247 ***Conway School district budget, I move that the municipal budget committee ask the Conway School***  
248 ***Board to revisit its priorities in programming, class sizes, staffing, maintenance, and any other lines***  
249 ***that are not absolutely essential with a view to reducing their budget request of \$40,109,103 by \$2***  
250 ***million and thereby reduce the projected school tax increase of nearly 24% to something closer to***  
251 ***8%; seconded by J. Lefebvre.***

252 ***Vote in favor 12-0***

253

254 D. Jensen- I we are asking the school then why aren't we asking the town to reduce its budget?  
255 What is the difference between doing this and just saying we support the default budget?

256

257 B. Marvel- this is about \$900,000 lower than the default.

258

259 Q. Lewis – I think we should say something similar to the town as well.

260

261 S. Sand- 8% seems like a significant increase, I'd be more apt to do a 5% increase.

262

263 J. LeFebvre- the budgets are both bottom line budgets, but at the end of the day it will be up to the  
264 school board and the selectmen to decide where they cut from, it is not our authority, and it is a battle  
265 we will not win.

266

267 S. Angers- the school has in the past returned around three million dollars and this ask is not an  
268 unreasonable ask.

269

270 Q. Lewis- onerous talks about the tax increase that we had because of the evaluation, so I agree it is  
271 not related to the school, I do not like the word onerous in the language and I think it should be  
272 changed omitted. Seconded by S. Angers.

273

274 ***Vote in favor of the amendment to remove onerous from the original motion.***

275

276 ***S. Sand motioned to omit enormous; seconded by F. Jost.***

277 ***Vote in favor 11-0-1***

278

279 **Motion as amended is below.**

280

281 ***B. Marvel motioned to in consideration of the increase in property tax burden that Conway***  
282 ***homeowners recently suffered, and the additional tax increase posed by the proposed Conway***  
283 ***School district budget, I move that the municipal budget committee ask the Conway School Board to***  
284 ***revisit its priorities in programming, class sizes, staffing, maintenance, and any other lines that are***  
285 ***not absolutely essential with a view to reducing their budget request of \$40,109,103 by \$2 million***  
286 ***and thereby reduce the projected school tax increase of nearly 24% to something closer to 8%;***  
287 ***seconded by J. Lefebvre.***

288 ***Vote in favor 12-0***

289

290 **Administrative items**

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292 **Old Business**

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294 **New Business**

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296 **Public and Media Questions and Comments**

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298 **Adjournment**

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300 ***F. Jost motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by D. Jensen***

301 ***Vote in favor 12-0***

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303

304 **Respectfully Submitted,**

305

306 *Alicia Gipson*

307 **Recording Secretary**